DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 130 978 SO 009 580

TITLE Social Studies Survey.
INSTITUTION Utah State Board of Education, Salt Lake City.
PUB DATE 75
NOTE 19p.; For related documents, see ED 065 383 and SO 009 579

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitudes; Comparative Analysis; Curriculum; Data Analysis; *Educational Assessment; Educational Research; Elementary Secondary Education; Individualized Instruction; Learning Experience; Parent Attitudes; Questionnaires; Resources; *Social Studies; Student Attitudes; *Surveys; Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

Social studies teachers, 12th grade students, and parents of students in junior and senior high school were surveyed about the social studies curriculum in Utah schools in 1975. The goal of the survey was to provide educators with information for planning and evaluation of current and future social studies programs. Questionnaires were administered to randomly-selected respondents, and parents were interviewed as well. Interpretive findings are summarized for 18 question areas concerning textbooks, homework, other reading material, invited guests, community experiences, resource aids, individualized programs, leadership, United Nations, human relations, deciding what is to be taught, parental inclusion, home values, comparing social studies classes, social studies emphasis, whether social studies should be required, rating social studies usefulness, and identifying what social studies classes are doing best and how to improve. Findings show that all groups agree that invited guests and resource aids should be utilized; many teachers and students are unaware as to whether the community is used as a base for social studies learning experiences; teacher opinions prevail in deciding course content; and parents feel most strongly that teaching home values is important. Among recommended improvements are better teaching, individualized instruction, and out-of-classroom learning experiences. (AV)

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ED130978

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SOCIAL STUDIES SURVEY

OFFICE OF THE UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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SP009580

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Salt Lake City, Utah
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FOREWORD

A representative sample of students, parents, and teachers were interviewed concerning programs, attitudes, and procedures presently existent in social studies education in Utah Schools.

As the United States approaches its Bicentennial, it is important that citizens review how well they are prepared to govern themselves in the future. To do so, they will need to consider what knowledge, skills and attitudes are necessary to assume civil responsibilities, where they stand regarding those objectives, and what educators will need to do to improve their performance in those areas.

It is hoped that the data from this survey will provide the kinds of information needed to assist educators in improving social studies education for the students of Utah.

Appreciation is expressed to the respondents and writers who contributed to the success of the survey.

Walter D. Talbot
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

INTRODUCTION

It would seem obvious that tomorrow's citizen must be better educated than today's. Over diverse problems are much too complex for simplified answers. Despite this need, educators are faced today with the difficult task of making social studies meaningful, relevant, alive and useful to students.

This assessment of the attitudes and opinions of social studies teachers, students, and parents concerning the present social studies curriculum in the schools of Utah is meant to assist educators in planning and evaluating their programs for improvement now and in the future.

Boone C. Colegrove, Specialist
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INTRODUCTION

Objectives

The major purpose of this survey was to ascertain the attitudes and opinions of social studies teachers, twelfth grade students, and parents of children in Jr. High and High School concerning the present social studies curriculum in the schools of Utah. A questionnaire was developed to measure the feelings of teachers, students and parents concerning how the present social studies curriculum is now being implemented, what it is trying to accomplish, and how well it is accomplishing its goals. Also, the questionnaire sought to elicit opinions as to how the social studies curriculum ought to be implemented and what it ought to be trying to accomplish. Every attempt has been made to ensure that both negative and positive responses were accurately recorded in order to provide the reader with an objective picture of the general attitudes and opinions of teachers, students, and parents on these questions.

Procedures

During the week of March 24-29, 1975, some 405 parents who have children in Jr. High School and High School were given a questionnaire to respond to. All parent interviews were conducted by carefully-trained interviewers in a face-to-face situation. During the month of April, 1975, a similar questionnaire was distributed to a random selection of 135 social studies teachers and 405 students throughout the State of Utah. Teachers and students filled out the questionnaires themselves. The questionnaire generally included fairly structured questions in order to discourage non-responses; nevertheless, several of the questions provided an opportunity for the respondents to spell out in some detail their particular feelings and attitudes.

Each respondent (parents, teachers, and students) were all selected on the basis of a random system in order to ensure that each individual in the population had an equal chance of being selected. All sample surveys are subject to ranges of sample variability, or the chance that statistical results might vary from those which a complete census of the population would produce. Sampling variability depends upon the size of the sample. Based upon the size of samples drawn for this research project, the following levels of tolerated error can be estimated:

Population Category	Population Size	Sample Size	Error
Parents	75,000+	405	± 5
Students (12th grade)	20,000+	412	± 5
Social studies teachers	400+	135	± 4

All data collected have been tabulated and percentages calculated with the aid of an electric computer. All presponses were punched onto data processing cards after each question had been coded. A summary of the analysis and interpretative findings for this study are listed in the following section.

TEXTBOOKS

1. Teachers were committed to the need of textbooks, as 83.0% thought they were very important or somewhat important. Parents (74.8%) and students (75.6%) were less sure that texts were important.

2. Teachers were significantly more supportive of the proper use of textbooks than were students, since 84.4% of the teachers thought textbooks were used in a helpful way as opposed to 71.6% of the students who felt the same way.

3. About eight out of ten of both teachers and students agreed that teachers of social studies required the reading of the textbook.

4. Nine out of ten teachers (88.1%), eight out of ten parents (79.8%), and two-thirds (66.7%) of the students thought that reading social studies texts should be required of students.

HOMEWORK

5. Teachers (85.9%) were more inclined to think that homework assigned by most social studies teachers was important or very important. Only 71.7% of the students and 68.6% of the parents agreed with this point of view, however.

6. When asked if homework should be a part of social studies assignments, greater differences of opinion resulted, since 85.9% of the teachers said it was important or very important, only 63.9% of the parents agreed with this point of view, as did 66.5% of the students.

OTHER READING MATERIAL

7. There appeared to be major differences of opinion between teachers and students as to whether teachers of social studies required other books to be read in the social studies area. Seven out of ten (69.6%) of the teachers thought so, but only fifty percent (49.3%) of the students agreed.

8. A substantial 97.0% of all teachers thought other books besides texts should be required reading in social studies classes. Only 73.5% of the students agreed and the parents (84.4%) occupied a moderate opinion between the teachers and students.

9. Six out of ten teachers (61.5%) and one-half (47.3%) of the students reported that social studies teachers require students to read magazine articles in subject areas in which they teach.

10. A strong majority (98.5%) of all social studies teachers interviewed thought magazine articles ought to be required reading in social studies classes. Some 87.2% of the parents agreed with this position, as did 75.2% of the students interviewed.

11. About two-thirds of the teachers (63.7%) thought that social studies teachers usually required students to attend certain movies or see a particular TV program. Less than one-half (46.1%) of the students agreed that this was a requirement by many social studies teachers.

12. Nine out of ten teachers (88.9%) believed that movies or important TV programs ought to be required viewing by social studies students. Less than two-thirds of the students (62.6%) or the parents (63.2%) agreed.

INVITED GUESTS

13. Although 56.3% of the teachers believed that most social studies teachers invited guest speakers to visit the classroom, only 41.5% of the students felt the same way.

14. When asked whether guest speakers should visit the classroom, a uninimity of support was indicative of all groups since 99.3% of the teachers, 96.6% of the students, and 93.8% of the parents felt speakers should be invited.

COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES

15. A significant percentage of teachers (20.0%) and students (10.0%) were unaware as to whether social studies teachers used the community as a base for social studies learning experience. Only 28.1% of the teachers thought that most social studies teachers used the community and only 19.9% of the students agreed.

16. Nineteen of twenty teachers (94.8%) believed that social studies teachers should allow classes to have educational experiences as a class in the community, whereas 88.6% of the students and 87.7% of the parents agreed.

RESOURCE AIDS

17. Nine out of ten (88.9%) of all teachers believed that social studies teachers used resource materials as an aid in the teaching process, 7.4% did not know or had no opinion about the use of resource materials learning, and only 3.7% opposed such use. Only two-thirds of the students (65.5%) agreed with the dominate teacher opinion.

18. Nearly all persons polled thought teachers should use resource materials as an aid to learning in the social studies classroom, since 99.3% of the teachers, 92.5% of the students, and 95.6% of the parents supported this position.

INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAMS

19. About forty percent of both the teachers (38.5%) and the students (40.8%) thought that most social studies teachers allowed students to study the subject material on individual programs. Allowing for those who did not know, a higher percentage of both teachers and students did not think that most social studies teachers followed this procedure.

20. Whereas 88.1% of the teachers felt that social studies teachers should allow students to study the subject

on an individual program, 74.5% of the students and 78.8% of the parents agreed.

LEADERSHIP

21. One-half of all teachers (49.7%) believed that nearly all or many social studies teachers allowed students an opportunity for leadership experiences in the classroom. However, only 24.6% of the students agreed with this position.

22. A total of 97.8% of all teachers surveyed thought that social studies teachers should or definitely should provide leadership experiences for students in the classroom. Nine out of ten students (88.9%) agreed, as did 91.8% of the parents.

UNITED NATIONS

23. One teacher in five (20.7%) did not know if social studies teachers taught the usefulness of the United Nations for obtaining world peace, and 14.8% of the students did not know. Whereas 4.4% of the teachers and 5.3% of the students thought that most teachers taught that the United Nations was not useful, 2.2% of the teachers and 16.3% of the students said that information was not taught at all.

HUMAN RELATIONS

24. While 60.0% of the teachers said so, only half (50.8%) of the students felt that social studies teachers had made the study of good human relations a part of the social studies curriculum.

25. Some 96.3% of the teachers wanted skills in human relationships taught in the classroom, and 92.5% of the students and 92.8% of the parents agreed with this position.

DECIDING WHAT IS TO BE TAUGHT

26. When considering whether social studies teachers or students decide what is to be taught of importance in the classroom, it was evident that teachers' opinions prevailed, since 80.0% of the teachers said that nearly all or much of what teachers thought was important was taught in the classroom and 87.9% of the students agreed. Still, 12.7% of the teachers and 18.7% of the students felt that social studies classes centered about equally between what teachers and students thought was important.

27. When asked to judge between method of learning versus learning essential information, six out of ten of both teachers (60.0%) and students (61.7%) agreed that both were of near equal importance. Of the remaining 40 percent, teachers (25.9%) favored how to think while students (27.2%) favored essential information.

PARENTAL INCLUSION

28. The data clearly indicated that a consensus of teachers (42.2%) and a majority of parents (62.5%) as well as a majority of students (60.2%) agreed that only a few social studies teachers made a reasonable effort to include parents in the learning experience of the student.

29. Whereas teachers (60.8%) and parents (56.5%) more often felt teachers should include parents in the learning process, only 29.6% of the students said it was very or somewhat important to them to have the parents included.

HOME VALUES

30. This question showed substantial differences of opinion among the groups. Whereas three-fourths (75.6%) of the teachers believed nearly all or many social studies teachers teach values that are consistent with home values, less than half (46.6%) of the parents fell into these two categories, and only slightly more of the students (53.9%) said the teaching of values was consistent with those at home.

31. This question showed substantial differences between parents versus students and teachers. Whereas over half (51.4%) of the parents believed teaching consistent home values was very important, only 23.0% of the teachers and 22.8% of the students agreed.

COMPARING SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES

32. When asked to compare the usefulness of social studies classes with other academic classes, a substantial number of social studies teachers (50.4%) felt the classes they taught were more useful in life. On the other hand, only 28.9% of the parents and 28.6% of the students believed social studies classes were more useful than other academic classes. Of those who said social studies classes were less useful than other academic classes, 26.7% were students, 13.6% were parents, and only 2.2% were teachers.

33. Social studies received a good report card from teachers (52.6%), an average one from students (44.4%) and parents saw no difference in interest when comparing social studies teaching with other "academic" classes.

34. About four in ten teachers (41.5%) and students (39.3%) felt that there was little difference between social studies and other academic classes with regard to how much one learns. About three in ten of each group felt that more is learned in social studies classes. The major difference occurred when comparing those that thought less is learned in social studies classes where 5.9% of the teachers indicated such, but 24.5% of the students thought they learned less in social studies classes. Parents (59.3%) did not feel there was a difference, and a few more thought they learned less in social studies classes than there were parents who thought students learned more.

SOCIAL STUDIES EMPHASIS

35. There was a general consensus that social studies classes most emphasized historical and academic information, since 65.2% of the teachers gave this response as did 71.1% of the students. In addition, 16.3% of the teachers felt most emphasis was placed upon the worth and dignity of the individual (only 5.8% of the students agreed) and another 13.3% of the teachers said "how to get along in life" (as did 14.5% of the students).

36. When asked which items tended to be emphasized next most, teachers most often said (in rank order): how to get along in life, the worth and dignity of the individual, historical and academic information, and the teacher's life experiences related to the subject. Students ranked the following as next most emphasized in social studies classes: how to get along in life, the worth and dignity of the individual, the teacher's life experiences related to the subject, and historical and academic information.

37. The three most frequent responses given by respondents were as follows: TEACHERS - the worth and dignity of the individual (43.7%); PARENTS - how to get along in life (44.2%); STUDENTS - how to get along in life (40.0%)

SHOULD SOCIAL STUDIES BE REQUIRED

38. A majority of the teachers thought either more social studies classes should be required (37.0%) or requirements should be kept as they are (56.3%). However, parents were much less apt to agree that social studies requirements should be expanded, with students' opinions falling between teacher and parental opinions.

39. A significant difference occurred between teacher respondents and parent respondents regarding encouragement of number of classes. Whereas 60.7% of the teachers believed pupils should be encouraged to take more social studies classes, only 16.8% of the parents and 31.3% of the students agreed. A

substantial 70.9% of the parents responded that students should be encouraged to take the same number of classes as they are presently taking.

40. The following shows what type of social studies classes teachers, students, and parents would like to see more of:

TEACHERS "More"		STUDENTS "More"		PARENTS "More"	
Economics	64.4%	American Problems	48.3%	American Govt.	42.7%
American Govt.	35.3%	Psychology	43.2%	American Prob.	38.8%
Social Studies generally	48.9%	Sociology	40.0%	Economics	37.0%
American Prob.	48.9%	American Govt.	37.1%	Psychology	25.9%
Sociology	40.7%	Economics	33.3%	Sociology	19.8%
Psychology	31.9%	World History	27.2%	American Hist.	18.3%
World History	24.4%	Social Studies generally	22.6%	World History	17.5%
American History	16.3%	American History	21.1%	Social Studies	15.1%
Utah History	16.3%	Utah History	21.1%	Utah History	14.1%

RATING SOCIAL STUDIES USEFULNESS

41. Teachers were of the opinion that a greater knowledge and understanding of the listed principles were more important than students and parents. Parents were less supportive of this usefulness than were students. Also, students never had much diversity of opinion when averaging the mean score as did the parents and the teachers. The item that scored highest among all recipients was the first choice of teachers, i.e., "the importance of being informed in order to be a good citizen". The second most important among all three groups surveyed was "the need

to cooperate with others", and the third most important among all three was "the worth of the individual". The three least important to all respondents were: "cultures outside the United States", "the family as an important part of society", and "education leading to and choosing a career".

WHAT ARE SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES DOING BEST AND HOW TO IMPROVE

42. Teachers, students, and parents all listed better teaching as being an important item to improve social studies education in Utah. Parents were more critical and emphasized the need for better teaching more often than did either teachers or students.

43. All three groups thought individualization of instruction was also important. As expected, the students were slightly more emphatic about this point than either parents or teachers.

44. Both students and teachers thought that experiences outside of the classroom were important for social studies educational improvement.

45. Students and teachers emphasized a need for increasing the variety and fields of study with social studies. Students thought strongly enough about it to list two kinds of comments: (1) those concerned strictly with variety, and (2) those requesting more fields of study.

46. It was significant that more than three out of ten teachers, more than half of all parents, and nearly one-fourth of the students did not comment on a good thing that public

schools were doing with regard to social studies education.